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Revised round-table process

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the members of the General Assembly the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "The revised round-table process" (JIU/REP/92/4).

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THE REVISED ROUND TABLE PROCESS

Prepared by
Salah E. Ibrahim
Joint Inspection Unit

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In its 20 years of existence, the round-table machinery has become more complex and, as was pointed out by many of those with whom we spoke in the countries visited, it is probably this complexity, together with the complexity of other technical cooperation mechanisms, that has obliged the LDCs concerned increasingly to call on UNDP to assist them in operating the machinery, instead of gradually doing without technical assistance.

The RT cycles entail: the organization of numerous meetings within the country and abroad, at different levels and attended by different participants depending on the subject; the preparation of several global and sectoral strategy documents, and macroeconomic analyses; and the collection of data and information on aid, cooperation, institutional infrastructure, human resources, etc. In contrast, the RTs make little effort to assess the impact of these various activities, to estimate the amounts generated or to measure the effectiveness of the various programmes.

In addition, the RTs suffer from a number of weaknesses: absence of formal agreements setting out the rights and duties of the participants (UNDP, LDC, donors). No contracting party to RT arrangements is required to provide specific aid or assistance, or specific funds, for any specific activity, on a specific date. In the absence of firm financial commitments, any attempt to programme the RT process is hazardous.

This raises the overall problem of the responsibility of beneficiary countries for the success or failure of RT activities. We share the view of all those whom we met in the countries concerned and in the the United Nations agencies responsible, in various capacities, for formulating and implementing technical cooperation policies in general, and RTs in particular, that the beneficiary countries should themselves be induced to design, execute and assess projects and programmes designed to apply for financing through RTC. Although the programme-based approach, government execution and the employment of national experts are major steps by UNDP in the right direction, it is our feeling that the United Nations still too often acts as a substitute for a country's authorities including in the implementation of RT mechanism.

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In order to allocate to the RT process specific tasks that distinguish it from other technical cooperation activities; to reduce the number of RT meetings and the excessively general and redundant documentation, the three main objectives of RTs analysed in the main part of this report, i.e. (1) the generation of additional resources; (2) the strengthening of capacities and infrastructures for aid coordination and management, and (3) the formulation of long-term strategies, should be reviewed.

The RT process should aim, within the framework of a simplified and less cumbersome procedure, at assisting those LDCs which so desire in holding annual meetings to reduce their debt and to generate additional funds for financing priority projects for which no other source of financing has been found. The funds generated through the round tables should be allocated directly to UNDP, or to the United Nations and specialized agencies, or to the beneficiary Governments responsible for execution of these projects, in order to reduce the number of intermediaries and shorten time-lags.

With the aim of simplifying RT activities and avoiding duplication, RTs should leave to NaTCAPs the task of assisting the Governments concerned in setting up or strengthening services responsible for collecting data and statistics on aid and technical cooperation, the coordination of aid and channelling it towards the execution of operational projects and programmes. These activities should be designed to enable the beneficiary Governments effectively to undertake, without assistance, all tasks relating to the coordination and management of aid and technical cooperation. In conjunction with the few LDCs still without NaTCAP arrangements, UNDP should consider the possibility of concluding agreements to introduce this procedure and achieving with them a rational distribution of tasks between the RTs and the NaTCAPs.

In order to consolidate the various macroeconomic studies and economic and social programmes and plans, and to integrate them within long-term development strategies - while reducing overlapping, duplication, loss of time and the wasting of financial and human resources, UNDP should help the LDCs concerned to set up, or strengthen, government services responsible for preparing and updating long-term strategies reflecting the Government's chief priorities and policies, and providing a framework for the action of the various bilateral and multilateral partners.

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INTRODUCTION

1. At the request of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) has included in its work programme the preparation of a report on the revised round table (RT) process.

2. In order to examine the modalities of this process and its usefulness for the least developed countries (LDCs) participating in it, we have held in-depth consultations with FAO, with several other specialized agencies in the United Nations system and a number of United Nations departments, and, more particularly, with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). We have also travelled to a number of LDCs having RT arrangements with UNDP.

3. This has enabled us to hear contrasting views on the RTs and to discuss the experience and lessons learned both by the United Nations system and by the LDCs involved. Copious and interesting documentation on the RTs has been compiled. We wish to thank all the persons we spoke to at the headquarters of the United Nations agencies and in the LDC Governments visited for all the clarification and data they gave us, without which the preparation of this report would not have been possible.

4. Lack of time and resources on the one hand and the belief that the donor countries are better equipped than the least developed countries to assess the impact of their grants, including those which are channelled to the LDC through the RT mechanism on the other, induced us to concentrate our consultations with the group of LDCs.

5. This report will comprise three chapters, on the evolution of the round table process (chap. 1), and an appreciation of the role of the RTs as a mechanism for generating additional aid (chap. 2) and as a means of securing assistance in the coordination of aid and the formulation of long-term development strategies (chap. 3). The most important conclusions and recommendations are set out at the end of the report.

CHAPTER 1. EVOLUTION OF THE ROUND TABLE MECHANISM

6. The round tables were conceived by UNDP in 1972 with the aim of assisting the developing countries in obtaining, at pledging conferences, financial resources from donor countries for projects and programmes whose financing had not proved possible through existing channels, such as the indicative planning figures (IPFs), voluntary contributions, regular programmes, and bilateral and multilateral aid.

7. The Substantial New Programme of Action (SNPA) for the 1980s for the LDCs (Paris, 1981), inter alia, integrated the RT mechanism within the panoply of means aimed at generating more resources to help the world's poorest developing countries.

8. The Programme of Action for the 1990s, adopted by the Second United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (Paris, 1990), went even further in this direction, stating that "Mechanisms such as the UNDP Round Tables and the World Bank Consultative Groups ... will continue to constitute the backbone of the process to translate the principles and commitments of this Programme of Action into concrete measures at the national level". 1/

9. In fact, the RT conferences (RTCs) have been gradually reserved for the LDCs, even though a few developing countries not belonging to the group of LDCs continue to participate in them. The LDCs have a choice between concluding RT arrangements with UNDP or consultative group (CG) arrangements with the World Bank. The latter are open to developing countries other than the LDCs. At the beginning of 1991, out of the 42 LDCs and the 3 "as if" LDCs, 23 opted for the RTs (17 in the Africa region, 5 in the Asia and Pacific region, and 1 in the Arab countries region) and 11 for the GCs (see table 1).

10. The list of countries having RT or CG arrangements is constantly evolving. The most recent document published by UNDP's Regional Bureau for Africa (RBA), 2/ giving a complete list of countries with RT arrangements dates back to March 1991 (see table 1). In relation to other lists contained in documents published by UNDP's Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific (RBAP) 3/ or the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), 4/ the RBA list is marked by differences regarding LDC membership of the various groups (RT, CG, or neither RT nor CG). Thus, the RBAP document

mentions Afghanistan as a country having RT arrangements, but it is not on the RBA list. Conversely, the RBA list includes Tuvalu as having RT arrangements, but this country does not appear in the RBAP and UNCTAD documents. The UNCTAD document includes the Republic of Yemen on the RT list, while the RBA document does not mention it. Similarly, the UNDP compendiums of ongoing projects 5/ repeatedly mention RT projects for LDCs such as Guinea, while the RBA document includes this country with LDCs having CG arrangements.

11. We think that better coordination, particularly between UNCTAD, which is responsible for preparing annual reports on the implementation of the Programme of Action for the LDCs, and UNDP, which is the prime contractor for RTs, should produce more homogeneous information on the LDCs concerned by RT or CG arrangements.

12. In this connection we would note that the purpose of this report is to deal with the RTs. As to the CGs, they will be mentioned whenever this is necessary for an understanding of the question. We would simply mention that the reasons for the choice between the RTs and the CGs are not always very explicit. It would seem that what prompts certain LDCs to opt more strongly for the RTs is that they are less binding than the CGs. The latter enable external financial resources to be obtained only on condition that the beneficiary country agrees to establish a structural adjustment programme, while the RTs impose no conditions. The initial idea to organize a RT meeting might come from the government, from UNDP or indeed from a third party.

13. With time, the RT mechanism, which, as indicated above, essentially consisted in organizing pledging conferences, has become more complex and more diversified, and its objectives more numerous.

14. It is customary to distinguish three stages in this trend: (a) the period prior to 1983-1984, when the mechanism was limited to assistance in raising additional funds; (b) 1985-1990, during which a series of actions was conceived, comprising the convening of a RT conference for principal donors, followed by a meeting in the beneficiary country (in-country review (ICR)), which was in turn followed by one or more sectoral or thematic consultations (sectoral consultations (SCs)); and (c) in 1990-1991, the RT cycle became, at least at the conceptual level, a continuous process of coordination and management of external aid programmes, assistance in the preparation of

Table 1

List of Least Developed Countries and their Aid Coordination

AFRICA	ASIA AND PACIFIC	ARAB STATES	LATIN AMERICA
• Benin	Afghanistan (c)		Haiti
Botswana	▪ Bangladesh	• Djibouti	
• Burkina Faso	• Bhutan	▪ Somalia	
• Burundi	Kiribati	▪ Sudan	
• Cape Verde	• Laos	Republic of Yemen (b)	
• Centr. Afr. Rep.	• Maldives		
• Chad	Myanmar	4 countries	
• Comoros	▪ Nepal		
• Equatorial Guinea	• Tuvalu		
▪ Ethiopia	Vanuatu		
• Gambia	• Western Samoa		
▪ Guinea	11 countries		
• Guinea-Bissau			
• Lesotho			
Liberia			
▪ Malawi			
• Mali			
▪ Mauritania			
▪ Mozambique			
• Niger			
• Rwanda			
• Sao Tomé e Principe			
• Sierra Leone			
▪ Tanzania			
• Togo			
▪ Uganda			
26 countries			

"As If" LDCs

AFRICA	LATIN AMERICA
Angola	Nicaragua
▪ Senegal	

Total LDCs: 42 countries (a)
Total "as if" LDCs: 3 countries

• Countries having Round Table arrangement with UNDP:
(Africa: 17 countries
Asia and Pacific: 5 countries
Arab States: 1 country)

▪ Countries having Consultative Group arrangement with World Bank:
(Africa: 7 countries
Asia and Pacific: 2 countries
Arab States: 2 countries)

Source: UNDP, Issues related to the Round Table Process, LDC Unit/RBA, March 1991.

(a) Following its adoption of General Assembly resolution 46/206 in December 1991, five countries have been added to the list of LDCs (Cambodia, Madagascar, Solomon Islands, Zaire and Zambia) which now number 47. Of these five new LCDs, three (Madagascar, Zaire and Zambia) have consultative group (CG) arrangements.

(b) Though Yemen is listed as a country showing no RT arrangements an RT meeting was held for this country in Geneva in July 1992.

(c) It would seem that Afghanistan which is listed here as a country without RT arrangement is going to have an RT meeting in 1992.

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macroeconomic studies and long-term development strategies, and strengthening of national institutional infrastructures and capacities for the coordination and management of aid programmes.

15. During the past 10 years (1982-1991), some 58 RT conferences have been held or programmed (see table 2). They have been followed by only 8 ICRs and 36 SCs, which means that a country has rarely been the subject of a complete RT process (RTC, followed by ICR, followed by SC). Moreover, these activities have in several cases been undertaken in a different sequence from that envisaged by UNDP. Thus, for example, in Burkina Faso three SCs were held in 1987 and 1989, without a prior RTC or ICR. In the case of other countries, there have been RTCs and SCs, but no ICR in between. And in the case of others, the RTCs and ICRs, even after the entry into force of the revised RT process, have not been followed by SCs. Lastly, there has been no periodicity in the holding of the RTCs, and the time-lags between the RTCs, ICRs and SCs vary, ranging from two to four years; this gives rise to scepticism as to the organic and conceptual links which should in principle connect the RTCs, ICRs and SCs and make them different phases of the same programme.

16. The venues of the RTCs have also been very diverse. Although UNDP and the LDCs have agreed in principle to convene the RTCs in Geneva, some have been held in Paris, Lisbon, London, Brussels, Washington or the capitals of beneficiary countries, as indicated in table 2. It should be noted, however, that since 1985, all RT conferences concerning African countries took place in Geneva.

17. It should be emphasized at this point that it is difficult to compile precise information on the venues and dates of RTCs. There are significant discrepancies concerning these data depending on whether one consults the documents of UNDP, 6/ UNCTAD 7/ or the agencies. By way of example, during the period 1985-1990 alone, UNDP mentions different dates from those of UNCTAD for the following RTCs: Bhutan (UNDP: 1989 and UNCTAD: 1988), Burundi (UNDP: 1988 and UNCTAD: 1989), Central African Republic (UNDP: 1986 and UNCTAD: 1987), Togo (UNCTAD: 1988 and UNDP: 1989). On the other hand, UNDP sometimes mentions RTCs of which there is no trace in the UNCTAD documents (Rwanda: 1985). Similarly, the data relating to the ICRs and SCs, their venues and dates, and their purposes are not only very difficult to obtain but, depending on whether the documents of UNDP, UNCTAD or the agencies are consulted, there are incomprehensible divergences.

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Table 2. RT, ICB and SC in 1982-1991

	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
African Benin		RTM Cotonou Feb.- March				SC1 (Civil Aviation and Infrastructure Transport) Cotonou, 17-19 March SC2 (Integrated Rural Development in Mono Province) Cotonou, 20-22 Oct. SC3 (Telecommunication) 16-17 Nov.				RTM Geneva
Burkina Faso						SC1 (Health), Ouagadougou 5-6 Jan. SC2 (Antidesertification) Ouagadougou, 12-14 Jan.		SC1 (WID) (Role of Women in Development? or Water in Development?)		RTM Geneva
Burundi			RTM Bujumbura Feb.				RTM. Geneva July	ICB. Bujumbura April		
Cape Verde	RTM		RTM Praia June		RTM Geneva, Oct. ICB Praia 1-3 Dec.	SC (Water Resources). Consultations with NGO) Praia, 17-19 Oct.				RTM. Geneva ?
Central African Republic					RTM. Bangui (Preliminary Review) March	RTM. Geneva June	SC (Rural Development) Sept.	SC (Rural Development) June		RTM
Chad	RTM			RTM Geneva Dec.	SC1 (Cotton) Washington 20-22 May SC2 (Agro-Sylvo-Sectoral Sector) N'Djamena 2-5 Dec.	SC3 (Transport) N'Djamena 9-14 Feb.			RTM Jan.	SC4 (Agro-Sylvo Pastoral)
Comoros			RTM Moroni July		SC1 (Agriculture) Moroni 10 Nov.					RTM
Equatorial Guinea	RTM Geneva Apr.						RTM. Geneva		SC1 (Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries) Malabo	

Table 1: RT, ICR and RC in 1982-1991
(Continued)

	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Gambia			RTM Banjul Nov.	RC1 (Fisheries) June RC2 (Donors Meeting on Emerg. Assistance) London 25-26 Sept. ?		RC3 (Agriculture and Water) Banjul			RTM	RC4 (Industry and Privatisation Development) RC5 (Agriculture and National Resources) RC6 (Population and Social Sector)
Guinea-Bissau			RTM Lisbun 21-23 May	ICR Bissau 16-18 Apr.	RC1 (Health) Bissau 4-6 Febr.	RC2 (Agriculture and and Fisheries). Bissau 4-8 May	RTM. Geneva		RC3 ? RC4 ?	
Lesotho			RTM Maseru 14-17 May	RC1 (Water and Sanitation) 11-13 June			RTM	ICR-RC1		
Mali	RTM Bamako 13-16 Dec.			RTM Geneva 12-13 Nov. ICR. Bamako 3-5 Dec.		RC1 (Drought and Desertification) Bamako. 29-30 June				
Niger						RTM. Geneva July	RC1 (Rural Development) Niamey, March RC2 (Transport) Niamey			
Rwanda	RTM Kigali Dec.			RTM Kigali ? (NGO meeting) ? June		RC1 (Water and Sanitation) Kigali, Jan.	RC2 (Post and Telecom.) Kigali 15-17 Feb.			RC3 ? (Education)? Kigali ?
Sao Tomé and Principe				RTM Brussels 9-11 Dec.	RC1 (Rural Development Food Strategy Fisheries, Cocoa Energy, Water Transport) Sao Tomé 17-22 May			RTM. Geneva March		

Table 2: BT, ICB and SC in 1982-1991
(Continued)

	82	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Sierra Leone										
Togo				BTN (preli. consult.) Paris Jan., ICB, Lomé June	SC1 (Rural Develop.) Kara, March SC2 (Infras. Social Sect. and Human Resources Develop.) Lomé, 20-24 Oct.			BTN		SC3 (Rural Develop.) Ruse BTN ? Geneva
Asia Bhutan		BTN Geneva 9-18 May			BTN Geneva 24 April			BTN Paris ?		
Laos		BTN Geneva 9-18 May			BTN, Geneva 21 Apr.	ICB, Vientiane, 2-5 June		BTN, Geneva ? April ?		
Maldives		BTN Geneva 9-18 May			BTN, Geneva 5 April	ICB, Columbo, 30 March		BTN		
Samoa		BTN Geneva 9-18 May			BTN, Geneva 22 April ICB, Apia May	ICB, Apia, June	BTN		BTN	
Tuvalu										
Arab States Djibouti		BTN Djibouti 21-23 March						SC1 ? (Water Resources and Energy)		

Source: Différents documents du PNUD, la CNUCED et les agences spécialisées.

18. In order to help to put these data in some sort of order, we have compiled the information relating to venues, dates and purposes of the various RTCs, ICRs and SCs (see table 2). In our view, this partial information should be supplemented by information on the number of participants, the sums generated, the cost of each phase of the RT, and other information.

19. We cannot of course, within the necessarily limited framework of this report, make good all the shortcomings in basic information on the RTs. But there is one which cannot be shirked indefinitely on the most varied pretexts: this concerns the real cost of the RTs. All that can be learnt from discussions with senior officials and perusal of United Nations documents is that it is very difficult to put a figure on this cost. Let us examine the question in a little more detail.

20. In 1984, the Governing Council of UNDP instructed its Administrator to submit a report on the role of UNDP in the implementation of the SNPA focusing particularly on evaluation of the RTC process (decision 84/10). Two meetings were held for this purpose in the Asia and Pacific region 8/ in 1984 and in the Africa region 9/ in 1985. Although the reports on these meetings emphasized, inter alia, that the RTs were becoming increasingly expensive, they gave no detailed figures for the pattern of their costs.

21. There are marked differences of opinion among UNDP officials at headquarters and in the field and government representatives whom we were able to meet about the cost of a RTC or a whole RT cycle (RTC + ICR + one or more SCs).

22. Examination of the ongoing projects contained in the annual UNDP compendiums reveals that, during the past 10 years (1982-1991), some 47 RT project documents have been signed by UNDP: 32 for the 23 LDCs having RT arrangements with UNDP (see table 3).

23. In addition, the compendiums show that: (a) some RTCs have cost only a little under US$ 700,000; (b) in practically all cases, the organization of the RTCs is assigned to UNDP; and (c) between the planning date of a RTC and the date when it actually takes place, two, three, four or even five years may elapse (see table 3).

24. In conclusion, we must refer once again to the difficulty in obtaining precise, homogenous and comparable information on the RT processes: beneficiary countries, venues, dates, purpose, cost, etc. It must be admitted that, without such basic data, it is not possible to undertake a sound analysis of these processes, assess their effectiveness or try to suggest solutions to the problems which they raise.

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Table 2

	Date Approved	Estimated Completion Date	Estimated Project Cost	Executing Agency	Government Contribution	RTM Held in	Follow-up Meetings
Africa							
Benin							
BEN-83-001 Préparation de la TR	1983	1984	111,724	UN	27,724	1983	BEN-83-013 BEN-90-002 BEN-90-003
BEN-83-013 Assistance au suivi de la TR et coordination des aides extérieures	1983	1989	632,05	UN	185,185	1987	3 SC in 1987
BEN-002 Renforcement de la capacité de BEN-003 coordination des aides extérieures	1990	1993	913,000	UNDP	96,154	d.n.a.	
Burkina Faso							
BKF Assistance à la réalisation d'une TR	1982	1989	293,026	UNDP	0	1991 ?	
Burundi							
BDI-84-001 Assistance à la réalisation d'une TR	1985	1986	65,042	UNDP	0	1988	
Cape Verde							
CVI-81-004 Assistance à la réalisation d'une TR	1981	1982	68,000	UNDP		1986	ICR 1986
Central African Republic							
CAF-82-012 Assistance à l'organisation d'une TR	1982	1989	255,372	UNDP	0	1987	2SC
Chad							
CHD-77-004 Mission de consultation pour la TR 1978	1977	1983	116,339	UNDP	0	1985	
CHD-84-003 Préparation de la TR sur le Tchad	1984	1989	560,860	UNDP	0	1990	CHD 89-002 CHD 89-002(S)
CHD-89-002 Appui au suivi de la TR	1989	1992	27,000	UNDP		d.n.a.	
CHD-89-002 (S) Appui au suivi de la TR	1989	1992	391,075	UNDP	193,075	d.n.a.	
Comoros							
COI-82-003 Assistance à la réalisation de la Conférence des bailleurs de fonds	1982	1986	143,922	UNDP	0	1984	1 SC
Equatorial Guinea							
EQG-80-019 Assistance à la préparation de una Conferencia de Donadores	1981	1986	283,885	UNDP	0	1988	1 SC
Gambia							
GAM-83-001 Assistance to the Realization of a Donors Conference	1984	1986	136,000	UNDP	0	1990	3 SC
Guinea-Bissau							
GBS-82-005 Assistance à l'organisation d'une TR	1982	1989	160,000	UNDP	0	1988	2 SC en 1990
GBS-89-005/D Appui à la coordination de l'économie	1991	1991	690,250	UNDP	0		

.../

Table 3
(Continued)

	Date Approved	Estimated Completion Date	Estimated Project Cost	Executing Agency	Government Contribution	RTM Held in	Follow-up Meetings
Lesotho							
LES-83-001 Assistance in Organizing a RT Conference	1983	1986	44,157	UNDP	19,157	1988	ICR 1988, 1 SC 1989
Mali							
MLI-81-003 Assistance à l'organisation d'une TR	1981	1985	283,520	UNDP	0	1985	
MLI-84-026 Assistance au suivi de la TR	1985	1985	91,500	UNDP	0		
MLI-86-023 Assistance au suivi de la TR	1986	1987	5,835	UNDP	0	1987	
Niger							
NER-82-016 Donors Round Table Conference	1982	1987	40,105	UNDP	0	1987	
Rwanda							
RWA-76-001 Mission Consultant for TR 1976	1976	1979	31,468	UNDP	0	1982	SC1 1987, SC2 1988
Sao Tomé and Principe							
STP-84-001 Assistance to External Aids Co-ordination	1984	1987	34,169	UNV	0	1985 ?	1 SC 1986
STP-88-002 Co-ordination des aides extérieures	1990	1992	646,361	UNDP	36,061	1989 ?	
Sierra Leone							
STL-83-005 Assistance in Sponsoring a RT	1985	1989	107,000	UNDP	0	?	
Togo							
TOG-83-006 Préparation et organisation de la Conférence de bailleurs de fonds	1983	1986	350,041	UNDP	14,135	1985	ICR 1985, 2SC 1986
TOG-89-006 Assistance à la réalisation d'activités relatives au processus TR	1989	1991	688,421	GVT	179,421	1989	1 SC
Asia							
Bhutan							
Maldives							
MDV-87-001 Strengthening of Aid Co-ordination	1987	1991	56,015	UN	0		
MDV-87-001 Strengthening of Aid Co-ordination	1987	1989	55,798	UN	0		
Tuvalu							
Arab States							
Djibouti							
DJI-82-006 Organisation de la Conférence de donateurs	1982	1985	148,179	UNDP	0	1983	1 SC
DJI-86-012 Table ronde secteur énergie	1986	1988	46,107	UNDP	0	1989	
			6,997,376		731,755		

Source: UNDP Annual Compendium of On-Going Projects from 1982 to 1990.

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CHAPTER 2. ROUND TABLES AND THE GENERATION OF ADDITIONAL AID

25. According to the UNDP Resident Representatives and the Resident Coordinators of the United Nations system in the LDCs which have RT arrangements and which we were able to visit, the RT mechanisms have enabled beneficiary countries to generate additional financial resources, to formulate global and sectoral long-term development strategies, and to strengthen their institutional infrastructures for the coordination, management and follow-up of aid.

26. According to the officials we spoke to, these countries have gradually learnt to make better use of their human resources and their national capacities in the generation of aid, to coordinate more effectively the activities of the various ministries in order to absorb more aid or obtain better-quality aid, and direct it towards better-established projects and programmes meeting priority needs, and to establish better understanding between investors and themselves.

27. The government officials with whom we had discussions painted an appreciably different picture. In their view, the formulation of the development strategies of several LDCs has been undertaken directly by the Governments of those countries, even if no assistance was available, since that is an indispensable task which cannot be avoided. Moreover, for some LDCs, the effectiveness of the RTs in generating aid has yet to be established because it is very difficult to identify those projects and programmes for which financing has actually been forthcoming through the RTs. Similarly, for other LDCs, the strengthening of national mechanisms for the coordination and management of aid through the RTs is duplicated in several of these countries, which have bilateral or multilateral cooperation programmes and projects in these fields.

28. So what is the actual situation? This is what we shall try to find out in two chapters, one on the role of the RTs in generating additional aid (present chap. 2), and the other on the assistance of the RTs in the formulation of a long-term development and aid coordination strategy (chap. 3).

29. The 1984 report evaluating the RT process in the Asia and Pacific region (mentioned above) devoted two paragraphs in all to estimating additional funds generated by the RTs for project execution. After remarking that "although not the only objective of holding the RT meetings, generation of actual

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assistance for development projects was a prime reason for the work and effort the LDC Government invested in the exercise", the report concluded that "the donor response to the project was either very poor or non-existent". 10/ In this connection, the report gave a list of developing countries receiving on a priority basis bilateral and multilateral aid from member countries of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC), subsidiary body of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), showing that the LDCs in the Asia and Pacific region appear rarely or never on this list. It should be mentioned at this point that the DAC countries and multilateral institutions mainly financed by them, contribute more than 95 per cent of total international aid to the LDCs.

30. The 1985 report on evaluation of RT experience in the Africa region (also mentioned above) similarly confirmed that, in principle, "one of the most important goals of the RT process is to secure firm commitments of aid to supplement national resources for financing a well-justified development programme". 11/ The report observed that "to determine whatever aid flows have indeed increased is, however, not an easy task because of the lack of data, the differences of view as to how the concept should be redefined and the fact that aid levels are affected by a number of forces outside the RT system itself". 12/ The report nevertheless concluded that "the documentation for RT meetings, including the final communiqués, does not generally show a clear correlation between aid requirements put forward by LDCs and aid committed by donors". 13/

31. As the two reports were based on data covering the period prior to 1980, we have had to consult other sources for more recent figures. Given trends in bilateral and multilateral aid from the DAC countries between 1980 and 1989, it is apparent that the LDCs having RT arrangements have been as successful (or unsuccessful) as the other LDCs, including those having CG's arrangements in attracting aid (see tables 4, 5 (a) and 5 (b)). It cannot therefore be concluded with certainty that the RTCs have helped to generate substantial additional funds.

32. This should not cause undue surprise because the RTCs embody no obligation on donor countries to commit themselves to additional financing. Moreover, the RTC meetings are often used by donors to announce amounts of aid which have been negotiated previously in the context of prior aid or assistance agreements, comprising, unlike the RTCs, commitments for specific amounts.

Table 4. Composition of Total Financial Flows to all LDC
in Current Dollars
Net Disbursements in $ million

Country	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
1. Concessional Loans & Grants a/	7990	7637	8279	8231	8070	9260	10644	12012	12757	12320
of which:										
- DAC b/	6050	5887	6166	6039	6593	7736	8919	10516	11796	11772
- OPEC c/	1167	1037	1289	1124	675	692	669	591	210	134
- Others	773	713	814	1168	802	842	1056	905	751	414
2. Non-concessional Flows d/	2060	1711	1479	465	-20	-70	-578	-325	194	-180
Total Financial Flows (1+2)	10050	9348	9758	8696	8050	9190	10066	11687	12959	12140

a/ Concessional assistance refers to flows which qualify as official development assistance (ODA), i.e., grants or loans undertaken by the official sector, with promotion of economic development and welfare as main objectives, and at concessional financial terms (if a loan, at least 25 per cent grant element).

b/ The countries members of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee are Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, United kingdom and United States.

c/ The countries members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) are Algeria, Ecuador, Gabon, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Kuwait, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Nigeria, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Venezuela.

d/ Non-concessional flows include grants from private agencies (private aid) and transactions at commercial terms: export credits, bilateral portfolio investment (including bank lending) by residents or institutions in donor countries; direct investment (including reinvested earnings); and purchases of securities of international organizations active in development.

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Table 5 a. Bilateral ODA from DAC Member Countries to Individual LDC with RT Arrangements

($ million)

Country	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
All LDC	3897	3732	4013	3748	3925	4744	5662	6549	7518	6878
of which:										
Benin	36	45	41	41	40	48	73	77	93	138
Bhutan	2	3	3	3	5	7	14	12	19	20
Burkina Faso	151	158	147	128	122	122	175	196	219	208
Burundi	60	65	75	69	70	77	90	88	83	90
Cape Verde	39	36	43	45	39	41	76	63	59	49
Central African Republic	75	73	69	65	68	62	85	109	107	99
Chad	20	31	35	51	59	96	102	120	146	128
Comoros	13	18	14	15	18	18	21	33	35	32
Djibouti	32	36	45	41	48	46	65	60	71	64
Equatorial Guinea	1	4	5	4	8	7	11	22	24	20
Gambia	17	19	24	21	32	31	59	51	55	56
Guinea-Bissau	34	41	34	32	31	24	41	48	48	53
Lao People's Dem. Rep.	17	17	21	13	14	16	19	30	36	43
Lesotho	64	62	57	65	66	52	56	62	70	69
Maldives	2	3	1	3	3	7	11	12	22	24
Mali	131	133	96	97	224	251	204	222	260	301
Niger	105	122	124	107	102	206	184	215	242	200
Rwanda	97	103	99	95	96	103	124	138	137	132
Samoa	14	14	15	17	11	13	18	22	22	21
Sao Tome and Principe	1	2	4	3	4	3	7	4	8	11
Sierra Leone	57	34	56	36	23	30	51	44	53	72
Togo	52	37	50	49	53	53	92	86	128	108
Tuvalu	5	4	5	4	5	3	4	25	13	6

Source: UNCTAD, The Least Developed Countries, 1990 Report - Annex II.

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Table 5 b. Concessional Assistance from Multilateral Agencies mainly Financed by DAC Member Countries to Individual LDC with RT Arrangements

($ million)

Country	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
All LDC	2153	2155	2152	2291	2668	2992	3258	3967	4278	4894
of which:										
Benin	51	33	35	39	38	44	60	55	65	107
Bhutan	7	7	8	10	13	15	18	24	20	23
Burkina Faso	54	50	54	53	56	68	86	72	77	73
Burundi	49	53	45	63	58	58	93	82	113	116
Cape Verde	21	13	11	15	21	23	29	25	26	26
Central African Republic	34	29	20	28	43	41	44	57	96	92
Chad	15	28	26	44	56	85	59	83	116	126
Comoros	12	14	12	14	16	21	19	20	17	13
Djibouti	9	14	10	11	11	16	15	20	19	12
Equatorial Guinea	8	5	8	7	7	11	10	20	24	21
Gambia	24	26	19	20	19	18	45	58	36	48
Guinea-Bissau	21	22	26	26	22	31	29	55	44	48
Lao People's Dem. Rep.	23	18	17	17	19	21	27	28	41	102
Lesotho	31	41	33	35	29	38	33	46	43	62
Maldives	4	2	2	4	3	4	5	9	7	6
Mali	93	77	63	72	86	98	122	126	173	155
Niger	57	42	44	51	54	97	121	137	127	99
Rwanda	51	43	50	54	63	73	77	97	107	96
Samoa	11	10	7	10	9	6	5	12	9	11
Sao Tome and Principe	3	4	6	8	7	9	5	14	17	25
Sierra Leone	27	24	25	29	22	31	33	19	40	28
Togo	35	26	23	58	53	51	71	31	79	95
Tuvalu	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	1

Source: UNCTAD, The Least Developed Countries, 1990 Report - Annex II.

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33. Additional aid would, however, be extremely beneficial because it could, in addition to mitigating budget and balance of trade deficits, help to finance the needs of the LDCs in essential areas, such as water purification, construction of housing, road maintenance, rural electrification, building of schools and facilities of all kinds, and strengthening of the institutional infrastructure. Our visit to certain LDCs enabled us to see that many work sites and operations have simply come to a standstill through lack of funds. There is no need to launch into the preparation of long-term strategies or the identification and formulation of priority projects and programmes, although this is essential before the generation of funds, in order to know how these funds could be used. The financial resources needed in order to provide the LDC populations with indispensable goods and services are quite simply lacking.

34. We should like to express our disagreement with the view that, before generating additional funds, it is essential to study carefully how they could be used, that the quality of investments is more important than their volume, and that if aid is not increasing, it is because the LDCs have a low absorption capacity, do not know how to coordinate aid and do not have the cadres or institutions necessary for the management of such aid. There is certainly some truth in all this but the fact remains that the LDCs are being forced to forego certain projects or to halt others through lack of funds.

35. Moreover, the LDCs having RT arrangements, like the other LDCs in fact, have become steadily more indebted. The total outstanding external debt of the LDCs increased from US$ 24.5 billion in 1980 to US$ 69 billion in 1988 (see table 6). In 1988, the LDCs with RT arrangements had external debts ranging from US$ 64 million to US$ 2,281 million. For example, a country as destitute as Guinea-Bissau, had an external debt of US$ 425 million. Despite the enormous expenditure with which they are confronted, the LDCs are compelled to devote increasingly large amounts to debt-service payments: US$ 1.5 billion in 1980 and US$ 3.8 billion in 1988. Guinea-Bissau (to take the same example) has to repay US$ 12-14 million every year (see table 7). In these circumstances, it is readily apparent that any additional aid the RTCs could generate would represent real lifelines for the LDCs, particularly since, despite all the efforts made, per capita aid to the LDCs remains modest and is even tending to decline: US$ 29 in 1980 as opposed to US$ 27 in 1989.

Table 6. Total External Debt a/ of LDC with RT Arrangements

($ million)

Country	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988
All LDC	24576	27995	36667	41119	42468	48987	56823	67398	69062
of which:									
Benin	484	574	644	727	631	757	1138	1109	783
Bhutan	–	–	3	2	6	9	21	46	75
Burkina Faso	295	312	380	427	431	548	684	873	871
Burundi	151	175	254	315	352	458	564	782	909
Cape Verde	20	40	72	90	88	108	124	139	137
Central African Republic	164	188	276	279	269	354	454	625	651
Chad	156	126	175	182	163	175	234	301	342
Comoros	50	53	80	86	105	135	164	201	193
Djibouti	28	22	47	64	141	237	264	274	258
Equatorial Guinea	57	67	124	121	79	115	147	170	179
Gambia	118	145	211	215	245	245	337	359	363
Guinea-Bissau	104	111	147	168	240	319	349	422	425
Lao People's Dem. Rep.	75	65	354	398	461	546	604	729	831
Lesotho	76	91	142	154	134	173	198	269	298
Maldives	28	39	48	71	80	61	66	70	64
Mali	692	739	859	1010	1183	1459	1769	2093	2121
Niger	608	703	892	974	1046	1242	1513	1767	1768
Rwanda	161	180	221	262	305	357	449	597	638
Samoa	57	56	63	70	72	74	74	79	77
Sao Tome and Principe	–	–	42	57	69	73	86	99	105
Sierra Leone	389	392	619	686	677	657	616	807	712
Togo	916	871	1069	940	910	970	1129	1337	1270
Tuvalu	–	–	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Source: UNCTAD, The Least Developed Countries, 1990 Report - Annex II.
a/ Disbursed outstanding at year-end including short-term debt and use of IMF credit.

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Table 7. Total Debt Service Payments a/ by LDC with RT Arrangements

($ million)

Country	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988
All LDC	1485	1789	2300	2689	3088	3141	3940	3678	3848
of which:									
Benin	24	55	30	72	60	46	60	47	37
Bhutan	–	–	2	0	0	0	0	1	2
Burkina Faso	17	15	27	27	28	33	38	36	47
Burundi	7	6	18	25	26	26	38	42	43
Cape Verde	0	0	2	4	8	6	6	8	9
Central African Republic	2	4	9	16	38	30	32	25	31
Chad	12	8	3	2	14	15	6	7	9
Comoros	2	1	2	2	3	3	3	2	1
Djibouti	6	5	4	7	19	41	67	67	35
Equatorial Guinea	2	4	5	10	10	12	9	8	8
Gambia	2	7	17	15	15	14	33	37	26
Guinea-Bissau	4	4	4	4	7	14	15	12	13
Lao People's Dem. Rep.	2	2	2	5	10	14	12	12	14
Lesotho	6	7	14	27	27	23	15	16	24
Maldives	0	1	2	6	26	13	13	6	9
Mali	17	13	36	19	32	57	67	76	92
Niger	87	116	172	134	125	128	169	167	180
Rwanda	3	4	10	11	24	27	22	27	25
Samoa	5	4	4	4	6	7	7	7	8
Sao Tome and Principe	–	–	0	2	3	4	2	4	2
Sierra Leone	43	55	48	62	56	44	69	28	30
Togo	78	58	61	83	113	80	125	122	156
Tuvalu	–	–	–	–	0	0	0	0	0

Source: UNCTAD, The Least Developed Countries, 1990 Report – Annex II.

a/ Total external including short-term and use of IMF credit.

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CHAPTER 3. ROLE OF ROUND TABLES IN THE FORMULATION OF DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES AND THE COORDINATION OF AID

36. As we have already seen, generating additional aid, as one of the prime objectives of RTs, tends to be overshadowed by assistance to LDCs in the coordination of aid and the formulation of a long-term development strategy. As, on the average and depending on the recipient country concerned, roughly one third of aid is used to finance technical co-operation programmes, RTs need to take into account the National Technical Cooperation Assessment Programmes (NaTCAPs) since in particular that the vast majority of LDCs having RT arrangements with UNDP also have NaTCAP arrangements with it (see Table 9).

37. In tables 10 and 11 we have endeavoured to summarize the activities of the two UNDP exercises: the round tables and the NaTCAPs. It is quite clear from the tables that RT and NaTCAP activities largely overlap in a number of areas, including the following: strategy formulation, strengthening of coordination institutions, and management of aid and technical cooperation activities. Although the RTs concern themselves with aid and the NaTCAPs with technical cooperation, the difference between the two concepts is mainly semantic, as the aid generated by RTs is largely though not solely used to finance technical cooperation programmes and projects. It is therefore not surprising that the distinction between the two exercises, RTs and NaTCAPs, is not clearly perceived, as we came to realize during our visits to LDCs and in our discussions with senior aid and technical cooperation officials.

38. Moreover, several RT and NaTCAP activities, including the preparation of documents, use the same analyses and data on aid and technical cooperation, regarding both individual LDCs and regions, and involve common administrative structures, as is illustrated, for example, by project RAF-88-022: Support to RT, NaTCAP, Economic Planning and Aid Coordination in Sub-Saharan Africa.

39. In addition, the RT activities take place in LDCs that receive United Nations assistance in enhancing their planning, economic forecasting and aid coordination services, such as, for example, the project for Gambia (GAM-82-005, Strengthening of Economic Planning and Plan Implementation), the project for Equatorial Guinea (EQG-90-001, Aid Coordination) or the project for the Niger (NER-85-002, Assistance in Economic Forecasting and Planning).

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Table 8. LDCs with RT Arrangements having NATCAP Arrangements, IMF and World Bank Funds or Credit Facilities

	UNDP	IMF/World Bank	
	NaTCAP Date of Approval	IMF (SAF/ESAF) (a)	World Bank (SAC) (b)
Benin	1987	1989-1992	1989
Bhutan	-	-	-
Burkina Faso	1989	1991	1985
Burundi	1986	1986-1989	1988
Cape Verde	1986	-	-
Central African Republic	1987	1987-1990	1990
Chad	1989	1987-1990	1989
Comoros	1989	1991	-
Djibouti	-	-	-
Equatorial Guinea	-	1988-1991	-
Gambia	1989	1988-1991	1989
Guinea-Bissau	1987	1987-1990	1989
Lao People's Dem. Rep.		1989-1992	1989
Lesotho	1990	1989-1991	-
Maldives	-	-	-
Mali	1989	1988-1991	1990
Niger	1990	1988-1991	1987
Rwanda	1989	1991	-
Samoa	1989	-	-
Sao Tome and Principe	-	1989-1992	1990
Sierra Leone	-	1986-1989	-
Togo	1990	1988-1992	1990
Tuvalu	-	-	-

Source: UNCTAD, LDC's 1991 Report, TD/B/1312, NY 1992
UNCTAD, TD/B/1289, Vol. I, Annex II, 1991; UNDP, NaTCAP Report by Maurice Williams, 1991; UNDP, Issues Related to the Round Table Process, 1991.

(a) Structural Adjustment Fund (SAF) or Enhanced Structural Adjustment Fund (ESAF). Period covered or year of commencement

(b) Structural Adjustment Credit (SAC). Period covered or year of commencement.

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Table 9. The RT Cycle

Phase	Major Participants	Activities and Documents	Outputs	Objectives
Preparation	- Government (Relevant Unit/ Working Group) - UNDP	- Initiate Government request - Assess/mobilize donors support (sensitization missions to donor countries/consultant visit to donor countries)	Master Plan (define scope and calendar of exercise)	Reach agreement on the RT cycle setting out the RT Conference, the sectoral consultation thematic meetings, and specific follow-up arrangements.
Round Table Conference	- Government - UNDP - Major donors	- Hold pre-view meeting for some LDC - Prepare background studies: (a) Long Term Perspective and Development Strategy over the Medium and Long Term (b) Macro-Economic Policy Framework (c) Sectoral Strategies/Human Resources Development (d) External Resources Priorities and Requirements (e) Memorandum on follow-up and Monitoring (on past commitments made by donors and recipient country)	Report of the RTC (summary of the principal results and conclusions of the Conference)	Reach agreement between Government and major aid partners on the country's development strategy, macro-economic policy and management reform programmes, aid requirements and level of external support required for the Government programmes.
Sectoral and Thematic Consultations	- Government - Lead Donor/Agency - Other donors - UNDP	- UNDP in consultation with the Government and the lead donor/agency prepares: (a) Timetable for the various stages of the sectoral consultation (b) Terms of reference for the sectoral study (c) The study - Set up a focal point - Prepare documents: (a) sectoral analysis and policy framework (b) sectoral programme - Hold SC meeting	- Government Policy and Programme - Report of SC	Translate global policy orientations and options of RTC into sectoral strategies and specific programmes and projects
Periodic Review Meeting	- Government - UNDP - Donors	- Establish agenda of the meeting/ send out invitations - Prepare documentation - Hold the meeting	Report	- Monitoring the follow-up of conclusions and agreements reached at the RTC and SC - Expedite the implementation of agreed policies and taking follow-up action for sustaining development process.

Source: Various UNDP documents.

Table 10. The NaTCAP Cycle

Phase	Major Participants	Activities and Documents	NaTCAP Outputs	Objectives
Preparation	- Government - UNDP	Initiate Government request/ UNDP agreement/Donors support/ Preliminary mission: (a) define scope and calendar for exercise (b) establish institutional framework of NaTCAP	- Master Plan - Project document	On the basis of a country's current national development objectives, priorities and strategies, an analysis of the adequacy of existing human skills and institutional capacities to implement its economic strategy, and an identification of areas which critically require strengthening.
Phase I	- Government Working Group - Senior Adviser + other consultants - UN agencies, UNDP donors	Data collection on technical co-operation: (a) Government development programmes (b) Assessment of Government institutional capacity in key sectors (c) Government programmes for institutional reforms (d) Situation and prospects of national human resources (e) Past and current TC (f) Management and planning of TC (g) Costing and budgeting of TC	- Data Base - Synthesis of analyses and recommendations - Technical Co-operation Policy Framework Paper (TCPFP)	A systematic assessment of priority technical co-operation need for immediate operations and for long term capacity building, and the extent to which current technical co-operation activities are meeting these needs.
Phase II	- Government Working Group - Senior Adviser + other consultants - UN agencies, UNDP donors	- Programming: Identify TC needs and ensure coherence of priorities	Technical Co-operation Programmes (TCP)	A phased programme of technical co-operation activities and programmes, in skill and capacity including measures which will ensure that the national development strategy can be met.
Follow-up	- Government Working Group - UN agencies, UNDP donors	Follow-up: (a) Strengthen Government management and planning capacity (b) Improve Government and donor co-ordination (c) Update regularly: data base, TCPFP and TCP (d) Monitor Internalisation of NaTCAP		Actions to strengthen the capacity for management of technical co-operation, including a country's mechanism for planning, programming co-ordinating, monitoring, evaluating and ensuring modalities of implementation.

Source: NaTCAP Evaluation. Report by Mr. Williams, UNDP, February 1991.

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40. Similar projects are also executed by the World Bank in other LDCs having RT arrangements, such as Chad (CHD-87-001, Support for Planning), Lesotho (LES-82-011, Strengthening of Government Macroeconomic Planning) or Djibouti (DJI-81-003, Technical Assistance for Planning).

41. The intermeshing of RT activities with those of the World Bank, and with those of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), is striking, not only in the area of assistance in strengthening planning and economic forecasting or macroeconomic studies services, but also as regards the preparation of basic studies providing a framework for RT and NaTCAP activities and for IMF's Structural Adjustment Facilities (SAFs) or Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facilities (ESAF's) and World Bank Structural Adjustement Credits (SAC's), (see table 9).

42. Although the prime objective of the Structural Adjustment Programmes of the World Bank and IMF is to assist the countries concerned in restructuring their development policies so as to guide them towards a market economy, through reforms of the State sector, foreign trade, the budget and institutions, like the RTs they take as their starting-point macroeconomic studies such as Policy Framework Papers (PFPs), Country Economic Memoranda (CEMs) or Public Investment Programmes (PIPs), which to a large extent overlap with the RT macroeconomic studies.

43. It is true that UNDP and the World Bank have signed agreements on the exchange of information and consultations to keep them informed of the contents of each other's documents. UNDP is also associated with the setting-up of a number of the World Bank's and IMF's structural adjustment programmes, through assistance to LDCs in the preparation of social measures to accompany structural adjustment policies (see, for example, UNDP's regional projects in Africa: RAF-86-037, Assessment of Social Dimension of Structural Adjustment in Sub-Saharan Africa; and RAF-89-021, Structural Adjustment Advisory Teams for Africa).

44. It should, however, be recognized, as was pointed out to us by the persons with whom we spoke in the LDCs visited, that several of the documents, meetings projects and programmes of UNDP (RT and NaTCAP), IMF and the World Bank would benefit from greater coordination, rationalization and integration.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

45. In its 20 years of existence, the round-table machinery has become more complex and, as was pointed out by many of those with whom we spoke in the countries visited, it is probably this complexity, together with the complexity of other technical cooperation mechanisms, that has obliged the LDCs concerned increasingly to call on UNDP to assist them in operating the machinery, instead of gradually doing without technical assistance.

46. The major obstacle to achieving the objectives of the RTs is not the absence of administrative infrastructure, nor the lack of cadres, nor the low absorption capacity of the LDCs, although these are undeniable. The multiplicity of studies undertaken and their close involvement with those of the NaTCAPs, country programming, the Mid-Term Review, the Development Cooperation Reviews (DCRs), the structural adjustment programmes, and projects and programmes carried out by the United Nations or the World Bank to strengthen forecasting, programming, planning and coordination services, have meant that the profile of the RT process is no longer clearly perceived and its specific usefulness has become obscure.

47. The RT cycles entail: the organization of numerous meetings within the country and abroad, at different levels and attended by different participants depending on the subject; the preparation of several global and sectoral strategy documents, and macroeconomic analyses; and the collection of data and information on aid, cooperation, institutional infrastructure, human resources, etc. In contrast, the RTs make little effort to assess the impact of these various activities, to estimate the amounts generated or to measure the effectiveness of the various programmes.

48. In addition, the RTs suffer from a number of weaknesses: absence of formal agreements setting out the rights and duties of the participants (UNDP, LDC, donors). No contracting party to RT arrangements is required to provide specific aid or assistance, or specific funds, for any specific activity, on a specific date. In the absence of firm financial commitments, any attempt to programme the RT process is hazardous.

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49. This raises the overall problem of the responsibility of beneficiary countries for the success or failure of RT activities. We share the view of all those whom we met in the countries concerned and in the the United Nations agencies responsible, in various capacities, for formulating and implementing technical cooperation policies in general, and RTs in particular, that the beneficiary countries should themselves be induced to design, execute and assess projects and programmes designed to apply for financing through RTC. Although the programme-based approach, government execution and the employment of national experts are major steps by UNDP in the right direction, it is our feeling that the United Nations still too often acts as a substitute for a country's authorities including in the implementation of RT mechanism.

50. In order to allocate to the RT process specific tasks that distinguish it from other technical cooperation activities, to reduce the number of RT meetings and the excessively general and redundant documentation, the three main objectives of RTs analysed in the main part of this report, i.e. (1) the generation of additional resources; (2) the strengthening of capacities and infrastructures for aid coordination and management, and (3) the formulation of long-term strategies, should be reviewed.

51. Now that virtually all LDCs with RT arrangements also have NaTCAPs and structural adjustment programmes, the RT process should focus on areas in which it is not in competition with them. It should essentially assist beneficiary countries in generating substantial additional funds.

(1) <u>The generation of additional funds</u>

52. In view of the huge needs of the LDCs for all types of financing, the RTs should assist them in generating steadily increasing additional funds and/or debt relief. With the agreement of the countries concerned, UNDP should organize, in their capitals, annual meetings which would be attended by all potential investors (bilateral, multilateral, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, etc.) and which would consider requests for additional financing. These requests should relate to carefully formulated projects for which financing had not been found within the framework of bilateral and multilateral agreements. UNDP would provide its assistance in formulating these projects and would ensure that they were transmitted (prior to the round table) to all the donors invited. The Government would be

responsible for ensuring that the projects presented fitted into its long-term development strategy and that they were in fact priority projects.

53. At the meetings, the Government should give a brief description of its strategy and of the major features of its development policy, and indicate the priority investments for which funds had been generated and those for which no financing had been found.

54. At subsequent RT meetings, the Government should provide information on the volume and breakdown of the funds generated through previous RT meetings, projects that had received particular funding, projects completed, those under way and those programmed for future years. Over time, an assessment of the effectiveness of the projects and of their impact should be provided by the Government.

55. Donors should delegate to these annual meetings representatives vested with the necessary authority to make firm financial commitments and/or engage into agreements on debt relief. Clearly, each donor will undertake to finance those programmes and projects that in his view meet the conditions to which he attaches importance and which are designed to achieve objectives that correspond to his aid policy.

56. For its part, UNDP as well as providing secretarial services for the meetings and assisting the Government in ensuring that the RTs achieve their objective, should assist investors and the beneficiary Government in allocating the funds generated to three categories:

(a) Funds to be paid directly to the Government for the projects for which it is responsible and for debt relief;

(b) Funds to be paid to specialized agencies and the United Nations for projects assigned to them by the Government;

(c) Funds to be made available to UNDP to execute the projects for which it is responsible.

57. In our view, such annual meetings essentially centred upon the raising of additional funds, the channelling of these funds towards the execution of projects and their direct assignment to the Government or to the specialized agencies or to UNDP for implementation would be of greater benefit than the meetings currently held in Geneva, which are largely devoted to general discussions and to the consideration of strategy and policy documents without any kind of financial commitment.

Recommendation No. 1

The RT process should aim, within the framework of a simplified and less cumbersome procedure, at assisting those LDCs which so desire in holding annual meetings to reduce their debt and to generate additional funds for financing priority projects for which no other source of financing has been found. The funds generated through the round tables should be allocated directly to UNDP, or to the United Nations and specialized agencies, or to the beneficiary Governments responsible for execution of these projects, in order to reduce the number of intermediaries and shorten time-lags.

(2) Strenthening aid coordination and management

58. Most LDCs involved in RTs have ongoing NaTCAP programmes. In order to avoid duplication and achieve a judicious share-out of RT and NaTCAP processes, activities to strengthen aid coordination and management institutions should be reserved for the NaTCAPs, in particular by establishing units with the following responsibilities:

(a) Collection of basic data and statistics on aid, technical cooperation, human resources and available national expertise;

(b) Aid management and coordination and the channelling of aid towards the execution of operational projects and programmes;

(c) Coordinating the identification, formulation, supervision of delivery, follow-up and assessment of these projects and programmes, and preparation of reports on these various phases.

59. Through its activities UNDP should aim at making the various government departments concerned capable of undertaking, in the long term without assistance, all the tasks described above.

Recommendation No. 2

With the aim of simplifying RT activities and avoiding duplication, RTs should leave to NaTCAPs the task of assisting the Governments concerned in setting up or strengthening services responsible for collecting data and statistics on aid and technical cooperation, the coordination of aid and channelling it towards the execution of operational projects and programmes. These activities should be designed to enable the beneficiary Governments effectively to undertake, without assistance, all tasks relating to the coordination and management of aid and technical cooperation.

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In conjunction with the few LDCs still without NaTCAP arrangements, UNDP should consider the possibility of concluding agreements to introduce this procedure and achieving with them a rational distribution of tasks between the RTs and the NaTCAPs.

(3) Formulation of a development strategy

60. This leaves the third major sphere with which the RT process is concerned: assistance to Governments interested in the preparation of long-term development strategies providing a framework for the various types of aid.

61. Yet again, as the RT process is an ad hoc and irregular phenomenon, it is difficult and hazardous to entrust it with responsibility for helping LDC Governments to formulate a development strategy. It would be more prudent for UNDP to assist the LDCs concerned in setting up or strengthening government departments responsible for preparing and periodically updating long-term development strategies. These strategies would provide the framework within which bilateral and multilateral global and sectoral aid would take its place, together with institutional reform policies.

62. UNDP should assist Governments that wish to enhance their capacity to negotiate programmes and projects falling within their long-term strategies, with the various bilateral and multilateral partners (including the organizations in the United Nations system, IMF, World Bank and the DAC).

Recommendation No.3

In order to consolidate the various macroeconomic studies and economic and social programmes and plans, and to integrate them within long-term development strategies - while reducing overlapping, duplication, loss of time and the wasting of financial and human resources, UNDP should help the LDCs concerned to set up, or strengthen, government services responsible for preparing and updating long-term strategies reflecting the Government's chief priorities and policies, and providing a framework for the action of the various bilateral and multilateral partners.

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Notes

1/ Paris Declaration and Programme of Action of the Second United Nations Conference on the LDCs. UNCTAD document, A/CONF.147/18, p. 44, para. 129, 12 March 1991.

2/ UNDP, Issues related to the Round Table Process, LDC Unit/RBA, March 1991.

3/ UNDP, Revised Procedures and Guidelines for the Round Table Process, LDC Unit/RBAP, March 1991.

4/ UNCTAD, Aid Coordination and Effectiveness, LDC 1981-1989, UNCLDC II/4, March 1990.

5/ UNDP, Compendium of Ongoing Projects. Various annual issues (from 1980 to 1990).

6/ UNDP, Revised Procedures and Guidelines for the Round Table Process, March 1991, and UNDP, Issues related to the Round Table Process, March 1991.

7/ UNCTAD, Aid Coordination and Effectiveness, 1981-1989, March 1990.

8/ UNDP, Review and Assessment of the SNPA Round Table Meeting Process for the Asia and Pacific region, LDC, September 1984.

9/ UNDP, Evaluation of the Round Table Experience in the Africa Region, Final Report, April 1985.

10/ UNDP Review and Assessment of the SNPA Round-Table Meeting Process for the Asia and Pacific LDCs, September 1984, p. 86.

11/ UNDP Evaluation of RT Experience in the Africa Region, April 1985, p. 10.

12/ Ibid., p. 10.

13/ Ibid., p. 10.